

THE “COLLECTIONS” OF THE MECCAN ARABIC LECTONARY

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Introduction

At the end of his important study on the collection of the Qurʾān, Harald Motzki concludes:

[However,] Muslim accounts are much earlier and thus much nearer to the time of the alleged events than hitherto assumed in Western scholarship. Admittedly, these accounts contain some details which seem to be implausible or, to put it more cautiously, await explanation, but the Western views which claim to replace them by more plausible and historically more reliable accounts are obviously far from what they make themselves out to be.¹

We agree with him on the antiquity of most of the reports on the collection of the Qurʾān, but not when he says “some details”, because there are many contradictions between some of them.² Above all, he does not seem to pay attention to the role of the religious, theological, ideological and political “imaginaire”³ of a human group which constructs its foundations by means of narratives that are not only “factual”, but partly adapted to a theological/ideological and political thought *in statu nascendi*, in accordance with which the “events” have to be.

¹ Harald Motzki, “The collection of the Qurʾān: A reconsideration of Western views in light of recent methodological developments”, *Der Islam*, vol. 78, 2001, 31.

² We reject the ludicrous story of Khuzayma or Ibn Khuzayma al-Anṣārī, or Khuzayma b. Thābit al-Anṣārī, or somebody of the Anṣār, from whom two “forgotten” verses were allegedly accepted and placed at the end of *al-Tawba*, because Muḥammad is said to have called him Dhū l-Shahādātayn! See *Geschichte des Qorāns (GdQ)*, 1961, vol. II, 14, n. 3; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Faṣl li-l-waṣl al-mudraj fī l-naql*, 2 vols., Mahmūd Naṣṣār (ed.), Beirut, 1424/2003, vol. I, 483–7, with many references 486, n. 2, 490–2, 293–4, in several versions; Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, 6 vols., M. al-Zuhri al-Ghamrāwī (ed.), Cairo, 1313/1895, vol. V, 188/*Musnad*, 20 vols., A. M. Shākir et al. (eds.), Cairo, 1416/1995, vol. XVI, 47, no. 21536.

³ See the interesting case-study by Patrick Franke, *Begegnung mit Khidr: Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im traditionellen Islam*, Beirut & Stuttgart, 2000 (reviewed by Claude Gilliot, in *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, vol. 90, 2006, 355–6).

Elsewhere, we have attempted to show the ambiguity of the verb *jama'a* (to memorize, to know by heart, to collect),⁴ or of *ta'lif/allafa* (to compose, to write down, to assemble the verses in the Sūras, to collect),⁵ and we believe that this ambiguity was not accidental but intended to cloud the issue! In another study⁶ we have also made a distinction between the “reconstruction of the Qurʾān after the fact (*en aval*)”,⁷ i.e. based on the so-called ʿUthmanic codex as seen in the project *corpus coranicum*⁸ of Gotthelf Bergsträsser (1886–1933) and Otto Pretzl (1893–1941), but also of Arthur Jeffery (1892–1959), and the “reconstruction of the Qurʾān before the fact (*en amont*)”,⁹ i.e. by researching “textual” elements “borrowed” from previous scriptures or religious traditions.¹⁰ Nowadays, some scholars prefer to speak of “intertextuality”, but this notion is rarely well defined, at least in Qurʾānic studies!

In the present study we shall not be concerned with the establishment of the so-called ʿUthmanic codex, but with “the Qurʾān before the Qurʾān”, of whose “history” the Qurʾān itself contains elements or allusions, and which is also present in the Islamic exegetical tradition

⁴ Claude Gilliot, “Collecte ou mémorisation du Coran: Essai d’analyse d’un vocabulaire ambigu”, in: Rüdiger Lohlker (ed.), *Hadīṣstudien: Festschrift für Prof. Dr. Tilman Nagel*, Hamburg, 2009, 77–132. We thank Harald Motzki for his valuable remarks on a first version of this paper at the 8th Colloquium *From Jahiliyya to Islam*, Jerusalem, July 2–7, 2000.

⁵ Claude Gilliot, “Les traditions sur la composition ou coordination du Coran (*ta'lif al-Qurʾān*)”, in: Claude Gilliot & Tilman Nagel (eds.), *Das Prophetenhadīṣ: Dimensionen einer islamischen Literaturgattung*, Göttingen, 2005.

⁶ Claude Gilliot, “Une reconstruction critique du Coran ou comment en finir avec les merveilles de la lampe d’Aladin?”, in: M. Kropp (ed.), *Results of contemporary research on the Qurʾān: The question of a historico-critical text*, Beirut & Würzburg, 2007.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 34, 35–55.

⁸ For the new *Corpus coranicum* project in Berlin (Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften and Freie Universität Berlin), see Michael Marx, “The Koran according to Agfa’: Gotthelf Bergsträssers Archiv der Koranhandschriften”, *Trajekte (Zeitschrift des Zentrums für Literatur- und Kulturforschung, Berlin)*, vol. 19, 2009.

⁹ Gilliot, “Reconstruction”, 34, 55–102, 102–4.

¹⁰ See the *status quaestionis* by Gilliot, “Rétrospectives et perspectives: De quelques sources possibles du Coran mecquois, I, Les sources du Coran et les emprunts aux traditions religieuses antérieures dans la recherche (XIX^e et début du XX^e siècles)”, to be published in *Mélanges Emilio Platti*, 2010, which deals in particular with studies written in German, from Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), etc., to Tor Andrae (1885–1947) and Wilhelm Rudolph (1891–1987), etc. The second part of this study: “Rétrospectives et perspectives: De quelques sources possibles du Coran mecquois, II, Le Coran, production littéraire de l’antiquité tardive”, will be published in *Mélanges à la mémoire d’Alfred-Louis de Prémare (Revue des mondes musulman et de la Méditerranée)*, 2010).

and historiography.¹¹ We shall concentrate on the beginning of Muḥammad's preaching, that is the Meccan Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān about its "Prehistory"

With prehistory we do not mean here the Qur'ānic words, passages or themes borrowed from Judaism, Christianity, Jewish-Christianity, Manicheism, gnosticism, etc.,¹² but those words, expressions or passages that seem to hint at a "text" or an oral "source" on which the Qur'ān could have been dependent.

We shall examine here what Günter Lüling¹³ has called "The Islamic scholarly terminology for the different layers of the Qur'ān text". Without necessarily accepting his general thesis on the Qur'ān originating in pre-Islamic Arabic Christian hymns, and in particular his argument that the adversaries of Muḥammad must have been Hellenistic Christians,¹⁴ we believe that the Orientalists before Jan Van Reeth were wrong not to take his ideas about "the Islamic scholarly terminology for the different layers of the Qur'ān text"¹⁵ into consideration, as we shall see below. Another stimulating point of departure for the present study has been the thesis of Ch. Luxenberg, according to whom:

If *Koran*, however, really means *lectionary*, then one can assume that the Koran intended itself first of all to be understood as nothing more than a liturgical book with selected texts from the scriptures (the Old and New

¹¹ We have dealt more thoroughly with these issues in "Rétrospectives et perspectives, I, II".

¹² See Gilliot, "Rétrospectives, I".

¹³ Günter Lüling, *Über den Ur-Qur'ān: Ansätze zur Rekonstruktion vorislamischer christlicher Strophenlieder im Qur'ān*, Erlangen 1974 (review by Maxime Rodinson, *Der Islam*, vol. 54, 1977, 321–5)/2nd ed., *Über den Urkoran...*, 1993)/English translation and revised ed., *A challenge to Islam for reformation: The rediscovery and reliable reconstruction of a comprehensive pre-Islamic Christian hymnal hidden in the Koran under earliest Islamic reinterpretations*, Delhi, 2003.

¹⁴ Id., *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten Muḥammad: Eine Kritik am "christlichen Abendland"*, Erlangen, 1981 (review by Claude Gilliot, "Deux études sur le Coran", *Arabica*, vol. 30, 1983, 16–37); cf. against this idea Jan M. F. Van Reeth, "Le Coran et les scribes", in: C. Cannuyer (ed.), *Les scribes et la transmission du savoir (XLII^e Journées Armand Abel-Aristide Théodoridès, Université de Liège, 19–20 mars 2004)*, Bruxelles, 2006, 73.

¹⁵ Lüling, *Challenge*, 12–13, 69, 111 (*muhkam* vs. *mutashābih*, and *mufaṣṣal*)/*Ur-Qur'ān*, 5, 62–63, 206–7, 209 (*muhkam* vs. *mutashābih*, (*mufaṣṣal*, *ibid.* and 111, 427)/*Ur-Koran*, same pagination (in both German editions less developed than in *Challenge*).

Testament) and not at all as a substitute for the Scriptures themselves, i.e. an independent *Scripture*.¹⁶

It should be clear to the reader that it is not necessary to follow either Lülting (pre-Islamic Arabic Christian hymns), or Luxenberg (entire passages of the Meccan Qurʾān being mere palimpsests of Syriac primitive text) in their systematic, sometimes probably too automatic ways of proceeding, if we consider that a part of their point of departure and some of their ideas have some *fundamentum in re*, or rather a certain basis in the Qurʾānic text itself, in the Islamic tradition, and in the cultural environment in which the Qurʾān was born. Speaking of “cultural environment” means that we shall concentrate here on the “Meccan Qurʾān”.

This “Lectionary” is in Arabic, Commenting a non-Arabic “Lectionary”?

We shall begin with Q. 1: 103 (*Nahl*): “And We know very well that they say: ‘Only a mortal is teaching him’. The speech (tongue) of him at whom they hint is barbarous; and this is speech (tongue) Arabic, manifest (*lisānu l-ladhī yulḥidūna ilayhi aʿjamiyyun wa-hādhā lisānun ʿarabiyyun mubīn*)” (adapted from Arberry’s translation). *Lisān* is rather to be translated in both cases by “tongue” than by “speech” (in Arberry’s translation).

Most of the ancient Muslim scholars consider this Sūra to be Meccan (al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, ʿIkrima, etc.),¹⁷ with some Medinan interpolations. Ibn ʿAbbās, for instance, believed that verses 126–29 were revealed between Mecca and Medina when Muḥammad returned

¹⁶ Christoph Luxenberg, *Die Syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran: Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache*, Berlin, 2000, 79/2nd ed., 2004, 111/*The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran: A contribution to the decoding of the language of the Koran*, Berlin, 2007, 104. Cf. the three positive review articles by Rainer Nabielek, “Weintrauben statt Jungfrauen: Zu einer neuen Lesart des Korans”, *Informationsprojekt Naher und Mittlerer Osten* (Berlin), (Herbst/Winter 2000), 66–72; Claude Gilliot, “Langue et Coran: Une lecture syro-araméenne du Coran”, *Arabica*, vol. 50, 2003, 381–9; Jan M. F. Van Reeth, “Le vignoble du paradis et le chemin qui y mène: La thèse de C. Luxenberg et sources du Coran”, *Arabica*, vol. 53, 2006, 511–24; and the following negative reviews: François de Blois, *Journal of Qurʾānic studies*, vol. 5, 2003, 92–97; Simon Hopkins, *Jerusalem studies in Arabic and Islam*, vol. 28, 2003, 377–80.

¹⁷ Qurtubī, *Tafsīr = al-Jāmiʿ li-aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, 20 vols., A. ʿAbd al-ʿAlim al-Bardūnī et al. (eds.), Cairo, 1952–1967, vol. X, 65.

from Uḥud,¹⁸ and that verses 95–97 were Medinan.¹⁹ Some of them said that this Sūra is Medinan from the beginning to verse 42. The opposite view is reported from Qatāda b. Di‘āma: it is Meccan from the beginning to verse 42, but the rest is Medinan.²⁰ For the Mu‘tazilī Abū Bakr al-Aṣamm it is entirely Medinan.²¹ As for the chronological order, it is the 70th Sūra in the codex attributed to Ja‘far al-Šādiq,²² which was adopted by the “Cairo edition” of the Qur‘ān. The order in the chronological classifications proposed by the Orientalists is as follows:²³ Muir (88th, first Medinan period);²⁴ Nöldeke (73th with some Medinan interpolations);²⁵ Grimme (83th, last Meccan period, save verses 110–124 or 110–128, Medinan);²⁶ Hirschfeld (Meccan of the fifth type: descriptive revelations, verse 1–114, *leg.* 113; 114–128,

¹⁸ Makkī b. Abī Tālib al-Qaysī (d. 437/1045), *al-Hidāya ilā bulūgh al-nihāya* [*Tafsīr Makkī b. Abī Tālib*], 13 vols., ed. under the direction of al-Šāhid al-Būshikhī, Sharjah, 1429/2008, vol. VI, 3943; Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, vol. X, 201. Father Ludovico Marracci, o.m.d. (i.e. Congregatio clericorum regulorum Matris Dei, 1612–1700), who did an excellent work in his edition, translation and annotation of the Qur‘ān, already knew through the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* that some people considered the three last verses of this Sūra to be Medinan; *Alcorani Textus Universus* [...], Patavii, ex typographia Seminarii, 1698, 399, *Notae*, col. 1.

¹⁹ Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, vol. X, 65.

²⁰ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr = Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 32 vols., M. Muḥyī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamid, ‘A. I. al-Šawī *et al.* (eds.), Cairo, 1933–1962, vol. XIX, 117; Régis Blachère, *Le Coran, traduction selon un essai de reclassement, des sourates*, 3 vols., Paris, 1947–1951, vol. II, 196; Blachère’s formulation is ambiguous, because by writing “v. Qatāda chez Rāzī”, he seems to suggest that Qatāda had the opposite position to the one given here. He writes also that this Sūra is considered to be Meccan up to verse 29 (*leg.* 39), with a reference to Abū l-Qāsim Hibat Allāh b. Salāma al-Baghdādī (d. 410/1109), *al-Nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh*, in the margin of al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-nuzūl*, Cairo, 1316/1895, 207, but Ibn Salāma writes *nazalat min awwalihā ilā ra’s arba’in āya bi-Makka*, which means up to verse 39, and the rest is Medinan.

²¹ Rāzī, *ibid.*

²² Arthur Jeffery, *Materials for the history of the text of the Qur‘ān*, Leiden, 330–1.

²³ William Montgomery Watt, *Bell’s Introduction to the Qur‘ān*, Edinburgh, 1970, 207. Montgomery Watt himself numbered the chronological classifications of Muir, Nöldeke and Grimme, in front of the “Egyptian”, i.e. the Cairo edition; on 110 he lists Q. 16 in the third Meccan period; see *id.*, *Companion to the Qur‘ān*, London, 1967, 130: “seems to be partly Meccan, partly Medinan”.

²⁴ Sir William Muir, *The Coran: Its composition and teaching and the testimony it bears to the Holy Scriptures*, Londres, 1878³, reprint Kessinger Publishing’s, n.d. [ca. 2000], 44. When necessary the numeration of the verses in the Flügel edition of the Qur‘ān has been replaced by that of the Cairo edition.

²⁵ Nöldeke, *Geschichte*, vol. I, 145–9: third Meccan period with some (possible) Medinan interpolations.

²⁶ Hubert Grimme, *Mohammed, I, Das Leben nach den Quellen, II, Einleitung in den Koran. System der koranischen Theologie*, Münster, 1892–1895, vol. II, 26.8; 27.14.

Medinan);²⁷ Blachère (75th, verse 110, interpolation).²⁸ We may conclude that according to the great majority of Muslim and Orientalist scholars the verse quoted above is to be assigned to the last Meccan period.

This verse requires some remarks.

i. First of all, it is within a group of verses (106–3) that constitute “a passage packed with self-referentiality”.²⁹

The word *lisān* is used in numerous other instances with the unmetaphorical sense of the vocal organ “tongue”. Some of these uses do not refer to the Arabic language, but rather, to the task of prophetic communication³⁰ (Q. 28: 34; 19: 97; 44: 58; this last example has to be connected with Q. 54: 17 and 22: 40). In Q. 28: 34, where Moses says: “And loose a knot from my tongue” and also in Q. 28: 34: “My brother Aaron is more eloquent than me in speech (*afṣaḥu minnī lisānan*)”, we find a reversal of Ex. 4:14–15: “Is not Aaron my brother? I know that he can speak well [...]. And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth with thy mouth, and with his mouth”.

The expression *lisān ‘arabī* occurs three times in the Qur’ān (16: 103; 26: 195; 46: 12), all during the Meccan period, and always with the metaphorical sense of speech. As the Qur’ān is a highly self-referential text, it is “somewhat self-conscious with respect to its language”.³¹ It says not only that it is in Arabic or in Arabic tongue/speech/language (*lisān*), but it also seems to declare that it is in a plain/clear (*mubīn*) tongue/speech/language: “We have revealed it, a lecture [or lectionary] (*qur’ānan*) in Arabic” (Q. 12: 2; 20: 113); “We revealed it, a decisive utterance (*ḥukman*) in Arabic” (Q. 13: 37); “a lecture [or lectionary] in Arabic” (Q. 39: 28; 41: 3; 42: 7; 43: 3); “this is a confirming Scripture in the Arabic language (*lisānan ‘arabiyyan*)” (Q. 46: 12); “in plain

²⁷ Hartwig Hirschfeld, *New researches on the composition and exegesis of the Qoran*, London, 1902, 144.

²⁸ Blachère, *Le Coran*, vol. II, xv.

²⁹ Stefan Wild, “An Arabic recitation: The meta-linguistics of Qur’anic recitation”, in: Stefan Wild (ed.), *Self-referentiality in the Qur’ān*, Wiesbaden, 2006, 148.

³⁰ John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and methods of scriptural interpretation*, Oxford, 1977, 99; cf. Neal Robinson, *Discovering the Qur’ān: A contemporary approach to a veiled text*, London, 1996, 158–9.

³¹ Herbjørn Jenssen, “Arabic language”, Jane Dammen McAuliffe et al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, 6 vols., Leiden, 2001–2006, vol. I, 132a.5–6.

Arabic speech (*bi-lisānin ‘arabiyyin mubīn*)” (Q. 16: 103; 26: 195).³² The reasons why the Qur’ān insists on the quality and value of its own language seem to be polemical and apologetic. The argument for its Arabic character, first of all, should be put in relation with Q. 14: 4: “We never sent a messenger save with the language/tongue of his folk (*bi-lisāni qawmihi*), that he might make [the message] clear for them”. This declaration, by stressing the language of this messenger (Muḥammad) and this people (the Arabs), can be understood as a declaration of the ethnocentric nature of this prophetic mission, but also as divine proof of its universality,³³ challenging another sacred language, Hebrew,³⁴ perhaps also Syriac, or more generally, Aramaic.³⁵

But in stressing that it is in Arabic, the Qur’ān also answers accusations that were addressed to Muḥammad during the Meccan period: “And We know very well that they say: ‘Only a mortal is teaching him’. The speech (tongue) of him at whom they hint is barbarous; and this is speech (tongue) Arabic, manifest (*lisānu l-ladhī yulḥidūna ilayhi a‘jamiyyun wa-hādhā lisānun ‘arabiyyun mubīn*)” (Q. 16: 103). The commentators explain *yulḥidūna* (Kūfan reading *yalḥadūna*)³⁶ as “to incline to, to become fond of”, which is the meaning of the Arabic *laḥada*.³⁷ This is the reason why, following most of the commentators, Marracci translated: *Lingua ad quam inclinant (idest, qua loquntur homines illi, a quibus dicunt Mahumetum doceri) est barbara*.³⁸ George Sale (1697?–1736), who is often very dependent on Marracci, has: “The tongue of the person unto whom they incline is a foreign tongue”.³⁹

³² Claude Gilliot & Pierre Larcher, “Language and style of the Qur’ān”, Jane McAuliffe *et al.* (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, Leiden, 2001–2006, vol. III, 113a.

³³ Wansbrough, *Quranic studies*, 52–53, 98.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 81.

³⁵ Claude Gilliot, “Informants”, Jane McAuliffe *et al.* (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, Leiden, 2001–2006, vol. II, 513; *id.*, “Zur Herkunft der Gewährsmänner des Propheten”, in: Hans-Heinz Ohlig & Gerd-Rüdiger Puin (eds.), *Die dunklen Anfänge: Neue Forschungen zur Entstehung und frühen Geschichte des Islam*, Berlin, 2005, 151–6, 167–9.

³⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 30 vols., A. Sa‘īd ‘Alī, Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā *et al.* (eds.), Cairo, 1954, vol. XIV, 180; A. Mukhtār ‘Umar and ‘Abd al-‘Āl Sālim Makram, *Mu‘jam al-qirā‘āt al-qur’āniyya*, 6 vols., 3rd ed., Cairo, 1997, vol. III, 34–35; ‘Abd al-Latīf al-Khatīb, *Mu‘jam al-qirā‘āt al-qur’āniyya*, 11 vols., Damascus, 1422/2002, vol. IV, 689–90.

³⁷ Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsīr*, 6 vols., ‘Abdallāh Maḥmūd Shihāta (ed.), Cairo, 1980–1989, vol. II, 487; Farrā’, *Ma‘ānī l-Qur’ān*, 3 vols., M. ‘Alī al-Najjār *et al.* (eds.), Cairo, 1955–1973, vol. II, 113.

³⁸ Marracci, *Alcorani Textus Universus*, 398.

³⁹ George Sale, *The Koran; commonly called the Alcoran of Mohammed [...]*, new ed., London, n.d. (ca. 1840), 207.

But this interpretation of *yulhidūna* by “to incline to” does not seem to be convincing. Indeed, it has been shown elsewhere that the linguistic and social context to which this verse refers could be a Syriac one, the Arabic root *l-h-d* being probably an adaptation of the Syriac *l'ez* (to speak enigmatically, to allude to), like the Arabic root *l-gh-z*.⁴⁰

The contrast *a'jamī*, often understood as barbarous or outlandish, with *'arabī*/Arabic, becomes very significant, if we consider Q. 41: 44 (*Fuṣṣilat*): “And if We had appointed it a lecture in a foreign tongue (*qur'ānan a'jamiyyan*), they would assuredly have said: ‘If only its verses were expounded (*fuṣṣilat*) [so that we might understand]? What! A foreign tongue and an Arab (*a'jamī wa-'arabī*)’”. *Fuṣṣilat* was understood by an ancient exegete, al-Suddī (d. 128/745), as “clarified” (*buyyināt*).⁴¹ The exegete al-Tha'labī (d. 427/1035), not quoting al-Suddī, writes: “whose verses are clear; they reach us so that we understand it. We are a people of Arabs, we have nothing to do with non-Arabs (*'ajamiyya*)”.⁴² Long before him Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) commented: “Why are they [i.e. the verses] not expounded clearly in Arabic in order that we understand it [i.e. the Qur'ān] and we know what Muḥammad says? (*hallā buyyināt bi-l-'arabiyyati ḥattā naḥqaha wa-na'lama mā yaqūlu Muḥammad*)”.⁴³

According to these passages of the self-referential Meccan Qur'ān, it seems that it is a kind of commentary or exegesis in Arabic of a non-Arabic book, or of non-Arabic collections of “texts” or *logia*, or of portions of a non-Arabic lectionary. The Qur'ān does not deny that Muḥammad could have information from informants, but it insists on the fact that what Muḥammad delivers is in a language that Arabs can understand.

ii. Our second remark has to do with the expression “in plain/clear Arabic speech/tongue (*bi-lisānin 'arabiyyin mubīn*)” (Q. 16: 103; 26: 195), which still needs more reflection, because the translation given here is—like most translations of the phrase—misleading from the

⁴⁰ Luxenberg, *Syro-aramäische Lesart*, 87–91/2004², 116–119/*Syro-Aramaic reading*, 112–115; cf. Claude Gilliot, “Le Coran, fruit d'un travail collectif?”, in: Daniel De Smet, G. de Callataÿ & J. M. F. Van Reeth (eds.), *Al-Kitāb: La sacralité du texte dans le monde de l'Islam*, Louvain, 2004, 190–1.

⁴¹ Ṭabari, *Tafsīr*, vol. XXIV, 127.

⁴² Tha'labī, [*Tafsīr*] *al-Kashf wa l-bayān 'an tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, 10 vols., Abū M. 'Alī 'Ashūr (ed.), Beirut, 2002 (a bad edition!), vol. VIII, 298.

⁴³ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, vol. III, 746.

point of view of morphology, and consequently of semantics. *Mubīn* is the active participle of the causative-factitive *abāna*, which can be understood as “making [things] clear” (so understood by al-Suddī and others, as seen above). Such an understanding of this expression is suggested by Q. 14: 4, which utilises the causative-factitive *bayyana*: “And We never sent a messenger save with the language/tongue of his folk, that he might *make* [the message] *clear* for them (*li-yubayyina lahum*)”.

But the adjectival opposition found in Q. 16: 103 between *a'jamī* on the one hand, and *'arabī* and *mubīn*, on the other, was understood by the exegetes as “barbarous”, i.e. non-Arabic (*'ajamī*) and indistinct (*a'jamī*) in contradistinction to clear/pure Arabic.⁴⁴ G. Widengren refers to “Muḥammad’s quite conscious effort to create an Arabic holy book, a *Qur'ān*, corresponding to the Christian Syriac *Ḳeryānā*”.⁴⁵ Consequently, according to the theologians, the *Qur'ān* must be in a “smooth, soft, and plain/distinct speech (*sahl, layyin, wādīḥ*)”: “In the *Qur'ān* there is no unusual/obscure (*gharīb*) sound-complex [*ḥarf*, or articulation, as the linguists say nowadays] from the manner of speaking (*luḡha*) of Quraysh, save three, because the speech (*kalām*) of Quraysh is smooth, soft, and plain/distinct, and the speech of the [other] Arabs is uncivilised (*waḥshī*), i.e. unusual/obscure”.⁴⁶ Elsewhere, we have dealt with the alleged superiority of the Qurashi manner of speaking and the so-called Qurashi character of the language of the *Qur'ān*.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Wansbrough, *Quranic studies*, 98–99; Pierre Larcher, “Language, concept of”, Jane McAuliffe et al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, Leiden, 2001–2006, vol. III, 108–9; Gilliot & Larcher, “Language and style”, 114–5.

⁴⁵ Geo Widengren, *Muhammad, the apostle of God, and his ascension*, Uppsala, 1955, 152.

⁴⁶ Abū l-'Izz al-Wāsiṭī (d. 521/1127), *al-Irshād fī l-qirā'āt al-'ashr*, quoted by Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, chap. 37, *al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 4 vols. in 2, Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (ed.), revised ed., Beirut 1974–1975, vol. II, 124; the three articulations quoted are: Q. 17: 51 (*fa-sa-yunghidūna*), 4: 85 (*muqītan*), and 8: 57 (*fa-sharrid bi-him*).

⁴⁷ Gilliot & Larcher, “Language and style”, 115–121, *et passim*. See the following seminal studies of Pierre Larcher, “Neuf traditions sur la langue coranique rapportées par al-Farrā' *et alii*”, in: B. Michalak-Pikulska & A. Pikulski (eds.), *Authority, privacy and public order in Islam*, Leuven, 2004; id., “D'Ibn Fāris à al-Farrā' ou un retour aux sources sur la *luḡa al-fuṣḥā*”, in: *Asiatische Studien. Etudes asiatiques*, vol. 59, 2005; id., “Un texte d'al-Fārābī sur la 'langue arabe' réécrit?”, in: Lutz Edzard & Janet Watson (eds), *Grammar as a window onto Arabic humanism: A collection of articles in honour of Michael G. Carter*, Wiesbaden, 2006; id., “Qu'est-ce que l'arabe du Coran? Réflexions d'un linguiste”, *Cahiers de linguistique de l'INALCO*, vol. 5, 2003–2005.

The adjective *mubīn* recurs in another later Meccan or early Medinan passage Q. 12: 1–2 (*Yūsuf*) (chronology: 77th for Muir, Nöldeke; 85 for Grimme; 53th for the Cairo edition, save verses 1–3, 7 Medinan):⁴⁸ “These are the signs of the manifest [rather: making things clear] book (*tilka āyātu l-kitābi l-mubīn*). We have sent it down as an Arabic lectionary (*innā anzalnāhu qur’ānan ‘arabiyyan*); haply you will understand (*la’allakum ta’qilūn*)” (adapted from Arberry’s translation). Here again *mubīn* means “making things clear” in opposition to a lectionary in a foreign language, (perhaps) explained or commented on by this Arabic lectionary in Arabic! For this verse, Ch. Luxenberg proposes the following translation according to the Syro-Aramaic understanding (but it could be also understood in this way without having recourse to Syriac):

These are the (*scriptural*) signs (i.e. the *letters* = the *written copy, script*) of the *elucidated* Scripture. We have sent them down as an Arabic *lectionary* (= Koran) (or as an Arabic *reading*) *so that you may understand* (it).⁴⁹

The idea that the Qur’ān “translates”, or rather transposes (French *transposer*; German: *übertragen*) into Arabic or comments passages from a foreign lectionary seems to be more clearly expressed in other passages.

What do fuṣṣilat and mufaṣṣal “really” mean?

Q. 41: 44 and fuṣṣilat

To some extent, the Meccan Arabic lectionary makes a distinction between a “lectionary in a foreign language” (*qur’ānan a’jamiyyan*), and the commentary, explanation, translation or transposition (German: *Übertragung*), i.e. *al-mufaṣṣal*, which is delivered by Muḥammad. The Qur’ān itself seems to suggest that some of its passages are commentaries of a lectionary recited or read in a foreign language (Syriac or Aramaic? this will be examined below): “If We had made it a barbarous lectionary (*qur’ānan a’jamiyyan*), they would have said: ‘Why are its signs not distinguished (*law lā fuṣṣilat āyātuhu*)? What, barbarous

⁴⁸ Montgomery Watt, *Bell’s Introduction*, 207; [Sami Awad Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh] *Le Coran, texte arabe et traduction française par ordre chronologique selon l’Azhar avec renvoi aux variantes, aux abrogations et aux écrits juifs et chrétiens*, Vevey (Suisse), 2008, 15.

⁴⁹ Luxenberg, *Syro-Aramaic reading*, 105–106/*Syro-aramäische Lesart*, 2000¹, 80–81/2004², 112; confirmed by Van Reeth, “Scribes”, 77.

and Arabic? (*a‘jamiyyun wa-‘arabiyyun*). Say: “To the believers, it is a guidance, and a healing” (Q. 41: 44).⁵⁰

In this context, *fuṣṣilat* does not mean “to be distinguished or separated”, but “rendered clear”, i.e. to be explained, *buyyināt*, in the interpretation of al-Suddī, and also the interpretation chosen by Ṭabarī himself;⁵¹ neither one of them, of course, means that Muḥammad was explaining parts of previous non-Arabic Scriptures, which is our own interpretation. In some languages, to “interpret” means both to explain and to translate (French *interpréter, interprète*; German *übertragen* “to translate, to transpose, which is a form of explanation or free translation”; Arabic *tarjama* “to translate”, but *turjumān/tarjumān* has the meaning of translator, but also of exegete. Ibn ‘Abbās is said to have been called by his cousin Muḥammad *turjumān/tarjumān al-Qur’ān*. *Tarjama* comes from the Syro-Aramaic *targem* “to interpret, to explain”). In the synagogues, the rabbis used to read *targums* in Aramaic after reading the Hebrew Torah, which uneducated people could not understand.⁵² The verb *faṣṣala* has the meaning of the Syro-Aramaic *prāsh/parresh* (to interpret, to explain), and it is a synonym of *bayyana*.⁵³

Fuṣṣilat is understood by the exegetes in contradistinction with *uḥkimat*, in Q. 11: 1 (*Hūd*) “A book whose verses are set clear, and then distinguished from One All-wise, All-aware (*kitābun uḥkimat āyātuhu, thumma fuṣṣilat min ladun ḥakīmin khabīr*)” (translation Arberry), on which J. Horowitz comments: “seine Verse sind fest zusammengefügt und dabei jeder einzelne wohl durchgearbeitet”.

‘Ā’isha on al-mufaṣṣal and “the Prophet of the end of the world”

But this understanding of *uḥkimat/muḥkam* vs. *fuṣṣilat/mufaṣṣal*, corresponding to the interpretation of the exegetes does not seem to fit in the context of the Meccan preaching. According to a tradition transmitted by Yūsuf b. Māhak al-Fārisī al-Makkī (d. 103/721, 110, perhaps

⁵⁰ Ibid., 77.

⁵¹ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. XXIV, 90, ad Q. 41: 1–2.

⁵² Van Reeth, “Scribes”, 76.

⁵³ Luxenberg, *Syro-aramäische Lesart*, 85/2004², 117/*Syro-Aramaic reading*, 110; see the excellent study of Jaroslav Stetkevych, “Arabic hermeneutical terminology: Paradox and the production of meaning”, *Journal of the Near Eastern Society*, vol. 48, 1989, 88–91 on the meaning of *fassara, faṣṣala, faṣl, tabyīn, mubīn*, etc.

even 114!)⁵⁴ from ‘Ā’isha (quoted by Tor Andrae,⁵⁵ then by Günther Lüling):⁵⁶ “The first [revelation] of it which descended was a Sūra of *al-mufaṣṣal* in which Paradise and Hell were mentioned (*innamā nazala awwalu mā nazala minhu sūratun min al-mufaṣṣali fihā dhikru l-jannati wa-l-nār*)”.⁵⁷ This tradition poses a problem to the commentator for whom the first revealed Sūra is Sūra 96 (*‘Alaḳ/Iqra’*), in which there is no mention of Paradise and Hell. This is why they propose to understand *awwalu mā nazala*: “Among the first...”, expressing the hypothesis that it could be Q. 74 (*Muddaththir*), in which Paradise and Hell are mentioned at the end, adding that this part of the Sūra was revealed “before the rest of Sūra *Iqra’* (96, that is after verses 1–5 or more)”⁵⁸

Already in 1912, Tor Andrae called attention to the fact that the Sūras 96 and 74, with their scenes of prophetic call were not the first Sūras, but that the first revelations according to an old well-established tradition were commentaries of previous Scriptures or traditions.⁵⁹

The great divergences of the exegetes on what *al-mufaṣṣal* could refer to are well known.⁶⁰ But the tradition of ‘Ā’isha hints at an interpretation of *al-mufaṣṣal* and *fuṣṣilat* that the exegetes could definitely not have held. This tradition shows first of all that the first preaching of Muḥammad dealt with the Last Judgement and the Hereafter.⁶¹ Paul Casanova has shown that at the beginning of his message (and probably later as well), Muḥammad considered himself to be *nabī*

⁵⁴ Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl fī asmā’ al-rijāl*, 23 vols., A. ‘A. ‘Abid & Ḥ. A. Āghā (eds.), revised by S. Zakkār, Beirut, 1414/1994, vol. XX, 501–3, no. 7744.

⁵⁵ Tor Andrae, “Die Legenden von der Berufung Mohammeds”, *Le Monde Oriental*, vol. 6, 1912, 18.

⁵⁶ Lüling, *Ur-Qur’ān*, 62; 427, n. 56/*Challenge*, 69 and n. 69; Gilliot, “Traditions”, 20–21.

⁵⁷ Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 46, *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, 6, ed. Krehl, vol. III, 395/Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī bi-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 13 vols. + *Muqaddima*, ‘A. ‘A. Bāz (ed.), numbering of the chapters and *ahādīth* by M. Fu’ād ‘Abd al-Bāqī, under the direction of Muḥibb al-Dīn Khaṭīb, Cairo, 1390/1970 (reprint Beirut, n.d.), vol. IX, 38–39, no. 4993/Trans. O. Houdas & W. Marçais, *El-Bokhāri, Les Traditions islamiques*, 4 vols., Paris, 1903–14, vol. III, 526.

⁵⁸ Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath*, vol. IX, 40.18–21.

⁵⁹ Andrae, “Legenden”; Lüling, *Wiederentdeckung*, 98.

⁶⁰ See the excursus in Gilliot, “Collecte”, 104–6, with bibliography.

⁶¹ Richard Bell, *The origin of Islam in its Christian environment*, London, 1926, 69–70, on the contrary, writes: “too exclusive attention has of late been paid to his proclamation of the approaching judgement” (69); Bell focuses rather on “the idea of gratitude to God”, “the power and bounty of the Creator, in the first predications” (74ff.).

*al-malḥama*⁶² (*rasūl al-malḥama*⁶³ or *nabī l-malāḥim*),⁶⁴ i.e. "the prophet of the end of the world".⁶⁵ To these qualifications could be added that of the Gatherer (*al-ḥāshir*), as explained by Jubayr b. Muṭ'im al-Nawfalī (d. 58/677)⁶⁶ given to 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān: "Muḥammad was called *al-ḥāshir* 'because he was sent with the Hour, a warner to you (*nadhīrun lakum*) in front of a great torment (*bayna yaday 'adhābin shadīd*)'".⁶⁷ This thesis corresponds to the tradition attributed to 'Ā'isha.

Many passages of the "first Qur'ān" appear as recitations (*qirā'a*, coming from Syriac *qəryānā*). Muḥammad (and/or others?) acts in the way of the Syriac *maqrəyānā* (the one teaching the *qəryānā*). His art is the *qəryānā*, the recitation of collected texts. But Muḥammad is also the *məpashqānā*, the interpreter, the exegete of the "original book" (*umm al-kitāb*), which is not in Arabic. His role is better defined by the Syriac word *mashləmānūtā*, the one who "translates and explains",⁶⁸ here passages in the Arabic language of the "original book". This activity seems to be expressed in the Qur'ān by the verb *faṣṣala*. In this context *faṣṣala* is the equivalent of the *kitāb mubīn* (Q. 5: 15; 41: 1) or the *qur'ān mubīn* (Q. 15: 1), by which the Arabic lectionary is qualified; it is a book which *translates and explains*.⁶⁹

⁶² Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, 9 vols., Beirut, 1957–1959, vol. I, 105.2–3, according to Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī; cf. Maqrīzī, *Imtā' al-asmā' bi-mā li-rasūl Allāh min al-abnā'* wa *l-amwāl wa l-ḥafada wa l-matā'*, 15 vols., M. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Namīsī (ed.), Beirut, 1420/1999, vol. II, 143 (from Jubayr b. Muṭ'im), 143–4 (from Abū Mūsā); 144: al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī and others understand this name as that of a prophet sent to kill the unbelievers; or the one sent with the sword; Ibn al-Athīr (Majd al-Dīn), *al-Nihāya fī gharīb al-ḥadīth*, 5 vols., Ṭ. A. al-Zāwī & M. al-Ṭīnāḥī (eds.), Cairo, 1963–1966, vol. IV, 240.

⁶³ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. I, 105.6, according to Mujāhid b. Jabr.

⁶⁴ Maqrīzī, *Imtā'*, vol. I, 5.4; vol. II, 146.5.

⁶⁵ Paul Casanova, *Mohammed et la fin du monde: Étude critique sur l'islam primitif*, I–II/1–2, Paris, 1911, 1913, 1924, 46–53; cf. Van Reeth, "Scribes", 71.

⁶⁶ Mizzi, *Tahdhib*, vol. III, 332–4, no. 888.

⁶⁷ Maqrīzī, *Imtā'*, vol. II, 144.1–8. It should be added that *al-ḥāshir* is also a collector of spoils. In the latter sense *al-ḥushshār* signifies collectors of the tithes and poll-taxes (*ummāl al-ushūr wa-l-jizya*); Zabīdī, *Tāj al-'arūs*, 40 vols., 'Abd al-Sattār A. Farāj et al. (eds.), Kuwait, 1385–1422/1965–2001, vol. XI, 23b; Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English lexicon*, 2 vols., Cambridge, 1984, vol. I, 575a.

⁶⁸ Arthur Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis*, Louvain, 1965, p. 10, n. 4; p. 12, n. 2; pp. 64, 100, 102; Van Reeth, "Scribes", 79–80.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 80; cf. Lülīng, *Challenge*, 13, 69, 111, who already understood *mufaṣṣal* as a commentary or a gloss.

Al-mufaṣṣal called “the Arabic”

Again Islamic tradition seems to support this hypothesis (according to which passages of the “first Qur’ān” appear to be commentaries of a previous Lectionary), besides the narrative attributed to ‘Ā’isha quoted above. In a loose (*mursal*) tradition found only, till now, in the Qur’ānic commentary of Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) there is an important remark from one of the transmitters about *al-mufaṣṣal*:⁷⁰ Ya’qūb b. Ibrāhīm⁷¹/Ibn ‘Ulayya⁷²/(‘*an*) Khālīd al-Ḥadhhdhā’ (d. 141/758)⁷³/(‘*an*) Abū Qilāba (d. 107/725 or 106):⁷⁴ The Apostle of God said: “I have been given the seven long [Sūras] in the place of the Torah, the duplicated in the place of the Psalms, the hundreds in the place of the Gospel, and I have been given preference with the discrete⁷⁵ [Sūras or book]”. Khālīd al-Ḥadhhdhā’ made a short, but pertinent, remark on *al-mufaṣṣal*: “They used to call *al-mufaṣṣal*: the Arabic. One of them said: there is no prostration in the Arabic (*kānū yusammūna al-mufaṣṣal: al-‘arabiyya. Qālā ba‘ḍuhum: laysa fī l-‘arabiyyi sajdā*)”.

This tradition and the short comment by Khālīd al-Ḥadhhdhā’ on *al-mufaṣṣal* require some explanation:

(a) The seven long [Sūras], the duplicated, the hundreds, *al-mufaṣṣal* in the traditional Islamic understanding⁷⁶

The seven long [Sūras] (*al-sab‘ al-tuwal* or *al-ṭiwāl* in other traditions) are the Sūras 2 (*Baqara*), 3 (*Āl ‘Imrān*), 4 (*Nisā’*), 5 (*Mā’ida*), 6 (*An‘ām*), 7 (*A‘rāf*), 10 (*Yūnus*).⁷⁷ But in other versions, Sūra 10 is replaced by

⁷⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. I, 100, no. 127.

⁷¹ Abū Yūsuf Ya’qūb b. Ibrāhīm b. Kathīr al-‘Abdī al-Qaysī al-Dawraqī al-Baghdādī (d. 252/866); Claude Gilliot, *Exégèse, langue et théologie en islam: L’exégèse coranique de Tabari*, Paris, 1990, 28.

⁷² Abū Bishr Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm b. Miqṣam al-Asadī al-Baṣrī al-Kūfī (d. 193/809); Gilliot, *Exégèse*, 28.

⁷³ Abū l-Munāzil [and not Abū l-Manāzil] Khālīd b. Mihrān al-Baṣrī al-Ḥadhhdhā’; Dhahabī, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, 25 vols., Shu‘ayb al-Arna‘ūt et al. (eds.), Beirut, 1981–1988, vol. VI, 190–2; id., *Mizān al-i’tidāl fī naqd al-rijāl*, 4 vols., ‘A. M. al-Bijāwī (ed.), Cairo, 1963, vol. I, 642–43, no. 2466.

⁷⁴ Abū Qilāba ‘Abd Allāh b. Zayd al-Jarmī; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, vol. IV, 468–75.

⁷⁵ “Discrete”, here in the mathematical, medical, and linguistic meaning of “composed of separate elements”.

⁷⁶ For more references to sources, above all on *al-mufaṣṣal*, see the excursus in Gilliot, “Collecte”, 104–6.

⁷⁷ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, M. M. Shākir & A. M. Shākir (eds.), Cairo, 1954–1969, vol. I, 101–2, according to Sa‘īd b. Jubayr; cf. Sakhāwī (‘Alam al-Dīn), *Jamāl al-qurrā’ wa-kamāl*

9 (*Barā'a/Tawba*), because 'Uthman believed that Sūras 8 (*Anfāl*) and 9 (*Barā'a*) were a single Sūra, because they were not separated by the *basmala* (they are called *al-qarīnatān*).⁷⁸

The hundreds (*al-mi'ūn*) are the Sūras whose verses number one hundred, more or less.⁷⁹ Alternatively, they are the Sūras which follow the seven long Sūras, and whose verses number one hundred, more or less.⁸⁰

The "duplicated" (or "repeated", *al-mathānī*)⁸¹ Sūras (or verses) are the ones which duplicate the hundreds and follow them: the hundreds have the first (formulations), and the duplicated have repetitions (of the previous). It has been said that the reason they received this name was that they repeat the parables, statements and warnings (*al-amthāl wa-l-khabar wa-l-ibar*), etc.⁸² These fanciful explanations show only one thing: the exegetes did not know what the Qur'ānic word *al-mathānī* meant (probably a term borrowed from the Aramaic or Jewish-Aramaic language, as proposed by Nöldeke).⁸³

As for *al-mufaṣṣal*, regarded as a part of the Qur'ān, all Muslim scholars agree that it ends with the ending of the Qur'ān, but they disagree about its beginning, for which several suggestions were made: 1. *al-Ṣaffāt* (37); 2. *al-Jāthiya* (45); 3. *al-Qitāl* (i.e. *Muḥammad*, 47); 4. *al-Fath* (48); 5. *al-Hujurāt* (49); 6. *Qāf* (50); 7. *al-Ṣaff* (61); 8. *Tabāraka* (i.e. *al-Mulk*, 67); 9. *Sabbih* (87);⁸⁴ 10. *al-Duḥā* (93).⁸⁵ Ibn abī l-Ṣayf

al-iqrā', 2 vols., 'A. H. al-Bawwāb (ed.), Mecca, 1408/1987, vol. I, 34; cf. Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, ch. 18, vol. I, 220.

⁷⁸ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Shākir, vol. I, 102, no. 131, according to Ibn 'Abbās. The qualification *al-qarīnatānī* is taken from Sakhāwī, *Jamāl al-qurrā'*, vol. I, 34.

⁷⁹ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Shākir, vol. I, 103; Sakhāwī, *Jamāl al-qurrā'*, vol. I, 35.

⁸⁰ Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, vol. I, 220.

⁸¹ For the meaning of *mathānī* see Q. 15: 87, and for its application to the first Sūra, see Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorans*, vol. I, 114–6.

⁸² Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Shākir, vol. I, 103; Firūzābādī (Abū l-Ṭāhir Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ya'qūb), *Baṣā'ir dhawī l-tamyīz fī laṭā'if al-Kitāb al-'azīz*, 6 vols., M. 'A. al-Najjār & 'Abd al-'Alīm al-Ṭahāwī (eds.), Cairo, 1963–1973, vol. II, 345–6, gives a list of the Sūras allegedly pertaining to *al-mathānī*.

⁸³ See also Arthur Jeffery, *Foreign vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, Baroda, 1938, 257–8.

⁸⁴ Which is preferred by Ibn al-Firkāh, according to Sakhāwī, *Jamāl al-qurrā'*, vol. I, 195.1. He is probably Burhān al-Dīn Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Ibrāhīm al-Fazārī al-Miṣrī al-Dimashqī (d. 7th Jumāda I 628/13th March 1231); Kaḥḥāla, *Mu'jam al-mu'allifīn*, 15 vols., Damascus, 1957–1961, vol. I, 43–4.

⁸⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath*, vol. II, 249.24–5 (on Bukhārī, 10, *Adhān*, 99, *ḥadīth* no. 765, 247 of Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath*; Bukhārī, ed. Krehl, vol. I, 197.6–8) ; cf. Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, vol. I, 121.

al-Yamanī⁸⁶ comes out in favour of nos. 1, 7 and 8; al-Dizmārī,⁸⁷ in his commentary of (Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī's) *al-Tanbīh*, for nos. 1 and 8; al-Marwazī,⁸⁸ in his commentary, for no. 9; al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998) and al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058) for no. 10. Nawawī (d. 676/1277) gives only nos. 3, 5 and 6. For Ibn Ḥajar, no. 5 (49, *Ḥujurāt*) is the preferred choice (*al-rājiḥ*).⁸⁹ Some, like Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī (d. 694/1295), consider *al-mufaṣṣal* to be the whole Qur'ān, an opinion which Ibn Ḥajar regards as anomalous (*shādhdh*).

The explanations given of the meaning of *al-mufaṣṣal* are as fanciful as those given of the sense of *al-mathānī*: "It is so called because of the great number of sections (*fuṣūl*) into which its Sūras are divided by the *basmala* (*li-kathrati l-fuṣūli llatī bayna suwariḥā bi-bi-smi Llāhi l-Raḥmāni l-Raḥīm*)",⁹⁰ or by the *takbīr*;⁹¹ or "because of the shortness of its Sūras";⁹² or "because of the small number of verses contained in its Sūras (*li-qīṣari a'dādi suwariḥi min al-āyi*)";⁹³ or it was called thus "because of the small number of abrogated [verses] it contains, and this is the reason why it is [also] called 'the one firmly established' (*al-muḥkam*)".⁹⁴ To understand this equivalence between *mufaṣṣal* and *muḥkam* in relation with the abrogation, it should be recalled that *mufaṣṣal* can mean "to be made to measure", in other words "without abrogation", or rather "with few abrogations".

(b) The remark of Khālīd al-Ḥadhdhā': "They used to call *al-mufaṣṣal*: the Arabic. One of them said: there is no prostration in the Arabic (*kānū yusammūna l-mufaṣṣala: al-'arabiyya* [without *ṭā' marbūṭa*]. *Qālā ba'ḍuhum: laysa fī l-'arabiyyi sajda*)".

⁸⁶ Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Zabīdī al-Makkī (d. 609/1212); Kaḥḥāla, *Mu'jam*, vol. IX, 57.

⁸⁷ Kamāl al-Dīn Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Kashāsib b. 'Alī al-Dizmārī al-Shāfi'ī al-Ṣūfi (d. 17 Rabī' II 643/11th September 1245); Subkī (Tāj al-Dīn), *Ṭabaqāt al-shāfi'iyya al-kubrā*, 10 vols., M. M. al-Ṭīnāhī & 'Abd al-Fattāḥ al-Ḥulw (eds.), Cairo, 1964–76, vol. VIII, 30, no. 1054; Kaḥḥāla, *Mu'jam*, vol. II, 53a.

⁸⁸ Perhaps Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad (d. 340/901), in his commentary on al-Muzanī's *Mukhtaṣar*; Kaḥḥāla, *Mu'jam*, vol. I, 3–4.

⁸⁹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Fathḥ*, vol. II, 249 (on Bukhārī, 10, *Adhān*, 99, *ḥadīth* no. 765); cf. Zabīdī, *Tāj*, vol. XXX, 167–8, for the whole text, taken from Ibn Ḥajar and Suyūṭī, with some additions.

⁹⁰ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Shākir, vol. I, 101; cf. Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, vol. I, 121.

⁹¹ Sakhāwī, *Jamāl al-qurrā'*, vol. I, 35.

⁹² Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 18 vols. in 9, Cairo, 1349/1929, reprint Beirut, n.d., vol. VI, 106–7.

⁹³ Zabīdī, *Tāj*, vol. XXX, 168.

⁹⁴ Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, vol. I, 121; Firūzābādī, *Baṣā'ir*, vol. IV, 195.1–2.

First of all, the Arabs, at the beginning of Islam, were already well acquainted with the prostration (*sujūd*). They knew this practice, which was diffused in the regions surrounding Arabia and among Christians and Jews.⁹⁵ When Islam came, of all the Muslim rites, this was the ritual prayer that met with the greatest opposition,⁹⁶ and the reason for this reluctance was the opposition to prostration itself, considered an alien practice and humiliating for their honour.⁹⁷

The number of ritual prostrations in the Qurʾān ranges between four and fifteen in *Ḥadīth* literature; these figures exclude all the prostrations from the *mufaṣṣal*. But there are also traditions prescribing prostration for verses from the *mufaṣṣal* (twelve or fourteen, or even sixteen prostrations).⁹⁸ An attempt to harmonize the different statements on prostration in the *mufaṣṣal* is found in, among others, the following tradition: [...] Abū Qilābaʿan Maṭar al-Warrāq⁹⁹/Ikrima/Ibn ʿAbbās: "The Prophet never prostrated himself at the recitation of the *mufaṣṣal* since he moved to Medina (*lam yasjud fi shayʾin min al-mufaṣṣali mundhu taḥawwala ilā al-Madīna*").¹⁰⁰ Those who consider this tradition reliable believe that it abrogates traditions in which Muḥammad appears as prostrating himself at the recitation of a Sūra or of verses from the *mufaṣṣal*, like this one, according to Ibn Maṣʿūd: "The first Sūra in which prostration (*sajda*) was sent down is *wa-l-najm* (Q. 53): the Prophet recited it in Mecca and he prostrated himself (*fa-sajada*)."¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Roberto Tottoli, "Muslim attitudes towards prostration (*sujūd*), I, Arabs and prostration at the beginning of Islam and in the Qurʾān", *Studia Islamica*, vol. 88, 1998.

⁹⁶ Ignaz Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, 2 vols., Halle, 1889–90, vol. I, 33: "[...] unter allen Ceremonien und Riten des Dīn hat aber keine mehr Widerstand erfahren, vor keiner religiösen Uebung haben sie entschiedenem Widerwillen bekundet, als vor dem Ritus des Gebets", and 33–9.

⁹⁷ Tottoli, "Muslim attitudes", 17; Meir J. Kister, "Some reports concerning al-Ṭāʾif", *Jerusalem studies in Arabic and Islam*, vol. 1, 1979.

⁹⁸ Roberto Tottoli, "Traditions and controversies concerning the *suḡūd al-Qurʾān* in *ḥadīth* literature", *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 147, 1997.

⁹⁹ Maṭar b. Taḥmān al-Warrāq Abū Rajāʾ al-Khurāsānī al-Baṣrī (d. 129/746); Mizzi, *Tahdhīb*, vol. XVIII, 136–7, no. 6586; Ibn ʿAdī, *al-Kāmil li-l-ḍuʿafāʾ*, 9 vols., ʿĀ. A. ʿAbd al-Mawjūd & ʿA. M. Muʿawwaḍ (eds.), Beirut, 1418/1997, vol. VIII, 134, no. 1882.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn Shāhīn (Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar b. Aḥmad, d. 385/995), *al-Nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh fi l-ḥadīth*, M. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥifnāwī (ed.), Mansoura, 1416/1995, 240, no. 238; Ibn Khuzayma (Abū Bakr Muḥammad), *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4 vols., M. Muṣṭafā al-Aʿzamī (ed.), Beirut, 1390–1399/1970–1979, vol. I, 280–1, nos. 559–560; Nawawī, *Sharḥ*, vol. V, 76–7: *ad Muslim*, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8 (*Masājīd*), 20 (*Sujūd al-tilāwa*), vol. I, 405–7.

¹⁰¹ Ibn Shāhīn, *Nāsikh*, 239, no. 236, or no. 237, according to Abū Hurayra.

We can say that the report “one of them said: there is no prostration in the Arabic”, quoted by the Basran Khālid al-Ḥadhdhā’, followed the “Basran” tradition of Ibn ‘Abbās.

(c) After these long but necessary explanations, we may return to the core subject with the commentary of Khālid al-Ḥadhdhā’: “They used to call *al-mufaṣṣal*: the Arabic. One of them said: there is no prostration in the Arabic (*kānū yusammūna l-mufaṣṣala: al-‘arabiyya* [without *ṭā’ marbūṭa*]. *Qālā ba‘ḍuhum: laysa fī al-‘arabiyyi saǰda*)”. In the Prophetic tradition transmitted by Abū Qilāba, the three previous Scriptures which figure in the Qur’ān (*al-Tawrāt, al-Zabūr, al-Injīl*) are mentioned, but the great specificity of Muḥammad, by which he has been favoured, is *al-mufaṣṣal*. This *mufaṣṣal* is qualified by Khālid al-Ḥadhdhā’ as “the Arabic”, so that it becomes a kind of “name”, in the following declaration “there is no prostration in the Arabic”.

None of these three Scriptures were “Arabic”. The Torah and the Psalms were in Hebrew, but explained/translated (*mufaṣṣar/mufaṣṣal*) in Aramaic in targums; the Gospel (in singular) was in Syriac (the *Diatessaron*), but Muḥammad and those who helped him translated/explained logia from these Scriptures, in Mecca, in his language (Arabic).

According to the Qur’ān itself, it is not only comparable but essential to the previous Scriptures, which are confirmed by it: “This Qur’ān could not have been forged apart from God; but it is a confirmation of (*taṣḍīq alladhī*) what is before it, and a distinguishing of the Book (*tafṣīl al-kitābi*), wherein is no doubt, from the Lord of all Being” (Q. 10: 37, translation Arberry). *Tafṣīl al-kitābi* should be put in relation with *mufaṣṣal* (it has the same root and the same grammatical pattern, second form, as *tafṣīl*) and be translated as “explanation [in Arabic] of a Book that is not in Arabic”. It corresponds to *al-mufaṣṣal: al-‘arabī* or *al-‘arabī*, in the declaration of Khālid al-Ḥadhdhā’.

Collections and Interpretation in Arabic

That the Qur’ān itself refers to collections of texts or traditions being the basis of the early predications is not a new idea:

The frequent phrase ‘this Qur’ān’ must often mean not a single passage but a collection of passages, and thus seems to imply the existence of other Qur’āns. Similarly the phrase “an Arabic Qur’ān” seems to imply that there may be Qur’āns in other languages. (The phrases occur in

proximity in 39.27/8f.).¹⁰² When it is further remembered that the verb *qara'a* is probably not an original Arabic root, and that the noun *qur'ān* almost certainly came into Arabic to represent the Syriac *qeryānā*, meaning the scriptural reading or lesson in church, the way is opened to the solution of the problem. The purpose of an Arabic Qur'ān was to give the Arabs a body of lessons comparable to those of the Christians and Jews. It is known, too, not only from Tradition and continuing practice, but also from the Qur'ān itself that it was used liturgically [17.78/80; 73.20¹⁰³].¹⁰⁴

That the Qur'ān is a liturgical book is commonly accepted; this feature has been stressed especially for the Meccan Sūras in several studies of Angelika Neuwirth.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, several scholars have drawn attention to a special form of its dependence on previous traditions and practices: "[...] this suggests that liturgy, specially liturgical poetry,¹⁰⁶ the Christian liturgy, which includes the Jewish, has decisively stimulated and influenced Mohammed".¹⁰⁷

This idea of compiling a lectionary from extracts of the previous Scriptures seems to appear in the following passage: "Move not thy tongue with it to hasten it; ours is to gather it, and to recite it. So, when

¹⁰² Q. 39: 27–8 (*Zumar*): "Indeed we have struck for the people in this Qur'ān (*fi hādihā al-qur'āni*) every manner of similitude (*min kulli mathalin*); haply they will remember; an Arabic Qur'ān, wherein there is no crookedness (*qur'ānan 'arabiyyan ghayra dhī 'iwajin*); haply they will be godfearing".

¹⁰³ Q. 73: 20 (*Muzammil*): "Thy Lord knows that thou keepest vigil nearly two-thirds of the night (*annaka taqūmu adnā thuluthayi al-layli*), or a half of it, or a third of it, and a party of those with thee".

¹⁰⁴ Montgomery Watt, *Bell's introduction*, 136–7; cf. John Bowman, "Holy Scriptures, lectionaries and the Qur'an", in: Anthony Hearle Johns (ed.), *International Congress for the study of the Qur'ān, Canberra, Australian National University, 8–13 May 1980*, 2nd ed., Canberra, 1983, 32–4.

¹⁰⁵ See several articles or contributions by Angelika Neuwirth, e.g. recently "Psalmen—im Koran neu gelesen (Ps 104 und 136)", in: Dirk Hartwig *et al.* (eds.), *Im vollen Licht der Geschichte: Die Wissenschaft des Judentums und die Anfänge der Koranforschung*, Würzburg, 2008, 160–2 "liturgische Beleuchtung". She regards the word *sūra*, probably borrowed from Syriac *shūrāyā* (beginning) in the introduction to a psalm's recitation, "a liturgical concept", 160; id., "Vom Rezitationstext über die Liturgie zum Kanon: Zu Entstehung und Wiederauflösung der Surenkomposition im Verlauf der Entwicklung eines islamischen Kultus", in: Stefan Wild (ed.), *The Qur'ān as text*, Leiden, 1996, summary, 100–3 (French trans. "Du texte de récitation au canon en passant par la liturgie: À propos de la genèse de la composition des sourates et de sa redissolution au cours du développement du culte islamique", *Arabica*, vol. 47, 2000, 224–7).

¹⁰⁶ See Lüling, *Ur-Qur'ān/Challenge*.

¹⁰⁷ Erwin Gräf, "Zu den christlichen Einflüssen im Koran", *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 111, 1962, 396–9 (reprint in Rudi Paret (ed.), *Der Koran*, Darmstadt, 1975, 188).

we recite it, follow its recitation. Then ours is to explain it (*inna 'alaynā jam'ahu wa-qur'ānahu, fa-idhā qara'nāhu fa-tba' qur'ānahu, thumma inna 'alaynā bayānahu*)”.

Bayānuhu, like *mubīn*, *fuṣṣilat*, *mufaṣṣal*, *buyyināt*, etc., may refer to the process of interpretation-translation-explanation by Muḥammad and by those who helped him in his role of commentator. The logia or extracts from a liturgical lectionary, or from several lectionaries, are interpreted in Arabic.

This seems to be suggested also in Q. 19: 97: “Now we have made it easy in thy tongue that thou mayest bear good tidings thereby to the godfearing, and warn a people stubborn”. In Syro-Aramaic *pashsheq* means “to facilitate, to make easy, but also to explain, to annotate, and also to transfer, to translate”.¹⁰⁸ But it can be also understood without having recourse to Syriac. Muḥammad, the warner (*nadhīr*) (of the last judgement) is the “interpreter” of selections of a foreign lectionary in his own tongue/language, Arabic, to a people who understands only (or, for some of them, almost only) Arabic.

In this context, the ambiguous verb *jama'a* (to collect, to bring together, to know by heart, etc.) is put in relation with the lectionary (Syriac *qaryānā*) “which designates a church book with excerpts (readings) from the Scriptures for liturgical use”.¹⁰⁹ It corresponds to the Syro-Aramaic *kannesh* (to collect). “It has to do with the collecting of these excerpts from the Scriptures, and indeed specifically in the meaning of ‘*compilavit librum*’”.¹¹⁰ It could be the basis of the above-mentioned verse (Q. 13: 103),¹¹¹ that it was a human who taught Muḥammad. Already before Luxenberg, R. Bell had noted about Q. 25: 4–5:

It is not certain whether the verse quoted above means that he had books¹¹² transcribed for him, or whether there is any truth in the charge. He may have thus got copies of some Apocryphal books, but if so he was

¹⁰⁸ Luxenberg, *Syro-Aramaic reading*, 123–4/*Syro-aramäische Lesart*, 98–9/2004², 130–1.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 121/97, 129.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ See Claude Gilliot, “Les ‘informateurs’ juifs et chrétiens de Muḥammad: Reprise d’un problème traité par Aloys Sprenger et Theodor Nöldeke”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, vol. 22, 1998; *id.*, “Informants”; *id.*, “Herkunft”.

¹¹² A. Sprenger’s point of view was that Muḥammad had a book on *asāṭīr al-awwālīn* (fairy-tales of the ancients) which could mean also “books of the ancients”, from *saṭāra* (to trace, to write). See our three articles on the informants mentioned above.

dependent on getting someone, who perhaps happened to be in Mecca, to read them and tell him what was in them.¹¹³

*Reading of Scriptures in the Christian Churches
and their Lectionaries*

The Christian Churches followed the Jewish custom of reading the Scriptures publicly, but they did it according to the lectionary principle.¹¹⁴ Thus, the whole of the Scripture, Old and New Testament, were never read to the congregation. The Syriac Churches usually had a lectionary (*kitābā d-qaryānā*) containing selections from the Law (*uraitha*), the Prophets and the Acts of the Apostles.¹¹⁵ Likewise the *Evan-gelion* consisted of selections from the four Gospels. "For the hearer this was the Gospel"¹¹⁶ (this is what is called *al-injil* in the Qur'an!). Another volume called the *Shliha* contained lections from the Pauline Epistles; then, another volume with the *Davida* or the *Psalter*. A last volume called *Targuma* could contain metrical homilies (*mêmrâ*), read after the *qaryānā* and the *Shliha*.¹¹⁷ For instance, the *mêmrâ* attributed to Jacob of Serug (d. 521) on the "Seven Sleepers" or "Youths (*tlâyê*) of Ephesus" in Syriac,¹¹⁸ or his discourse about Alexander, the believing King, and the gate he made against Gog and Magog,¹¹⁹ were expected to be read in church, presumably as a *targuma*. J. Bowman has seen a very old manuscript of the Syriac New Testament belonging to the

¹¹³ Bell, *Origin*, 112.

¹¹⁴ This principle has survived until the present day in both the Eastern and Western Churches (especially, but not only, in monasteries and convents), even if some changes have occurred through time.

¹¹⁵ Sometimes there were independent volumes for each of the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms; and the Gospels, Acts and Paul's Epistle in still another volume. But very few Syriac churches possessed this.

¹¹⁶ Bowman, "Holy Scriptures", 31.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 31–2.

¹¹⁸ Fr. Jourdan, *La tradition des sept dormants*, Paris, 1983, 59–65, translation of the short version; S. H. Griffith, "Christian lore and the Arabic Qur'an: The 'Companions of the Cave' in *Surat al-kahf* and the Syriac tradition", in: G. S. Reynolds (ed.), *Qur'an in its historical context*, London, 2007, 116–30; cf. Q. 18: 9–26.

¹¹⁹ *The History of Alexander the Great* (Pseudo-Callisthenes), trans. E. A. W. Budge, 1889, 182–4; cf. Q. 18: 83–98 and see Emeri van Donzel & Andrea Schmidt, *Gog and Magog in early Eastern Christian and Islamic sources: Sallam's quest for Alexander's wall*, Leiden, 2010.

village of Khoyyi, on the coast of Lake Urmi. “The Gospels had in the margin sections marked off as *qeryane*, and subdivided into *Surata*”.¹²⁰

Having said this, it is not easy to determine which Gospel text Muḥammad could have been familiar with. However, there are a few rare direct references in the Qurʾān to the Gospels. Thus Q. 48: 29: “Such is their likeness in the Torah and their likeness in the Gospel—like as sown corn that sendeth forth its shoot and strengthenth it and riseth firm upon its stalk, delighting the sowers—that He may enrage the disbelievers with (the sight of) them. God hath promised, unto such of them as believe and do good works, forgiveness and immense reward”. This text combines two Gospel pericopes—Mark 4:26–27 and Matthew 12:23—the same amalgam made by the *Diatessaron*, as for example in the Middle-Dutch translation thereof, made in the 13th century from a lost Latin translation, and in the Arabic translation thereof.¹²¹

Van Reeth applies the same treatment to those passages of the Qurʾān which pertain to the infancy of Mary (Q. 3: 35–48), John (Q. 19: 3), and Jesus (Q. 3: 37; 19: 22–26), showing again that “the Koran gives evidence (French : témoigner de) to the tradition of the *Diatessaron*”.¹²² He does the same again with the Docetist version of the Crucifixion of Jesus (Q. 4: 157), but in this case he refers to Angel-Christology¹²³ (cf. G. Lüling), notably that of the Elkesaites, asserting that “[r]ather than a likeness which God should have shaped and substituted to be crucified instead of him, it would have been originally the human form which God made for Jesus at the time of the incarnation, and in which his transcendent and angelic person could descend”.¹²⁴ For this docetic

¹²⁰ Bowman, “Holy Scriptures”, 31.

¹²¹ *Diatessaron Leodiense*, C. C. de Bruin (ed.), Leiden, 1970, 92, §93sq. (English trans., 93); *Diatessaron de Tatiens*, texte arabe..., Marmardji, A. S. (ed.), Beirut, 1935, 159f.

¹²² Van Reeth, “Evangile”, 163. On the possible influence of the *Diatessaron* and the Apocryphal Gospels on the Qurʾān see J. Gnllka, *Die Nazarener und der Koran: Eine Spurensuche*, Freiburg, Herder, 2007, 96–104 (French trans., *Qui sont les chrétiens du Coran?*, Paris, 2008, 101–9); on the influence of the *Diatessaron* on the Qurʾān, see also John Bowman, “The debt of Islam to Monophysite Syrian Christianity”, in: E. C. B. MacLaurin (ed.), *Essays in honour of Griffithes Wheeler Thatcher (1863–1950)*, Sydney, 1967, *passim*.

¹²³ Lüling, *Challenge*, 21, speaks of the “ur-Christian angel-Christological doctrine... contained in the ground layer of the Koran”; Mondher Sfar, *Le Coran, la Bible et l’Orient ancien*, Paris, 185–6, has shown that the prophet/Prophet has an “angelical status”.

¹²⁴ Van Reeth, “Evangile”, 166.

view of Jesus and the denial of crucifixion, M. Gil refers to Basilides and his followers, and then to the Manichaeans, who are said to have believed that there were two Jesuses. The "false" is sometimes called "the devil", or the "son of the widow", used by God to replace him.¹²⁵

Even though the *Diatessaron* does not explain all of the Qur'ānic details about the life of Jesus (and neither do the Apocrypha), Van Reeth draws the following conclusion:

In referring to the *Diatessaron* as Mani had done it before him, the Prophet Muhammad could emphasize the unicity of the Gospel. Moreover he came within the scope of the posterity of Marcion, Tatian and Mani. All of them wanted to establish or re-establish the true Gospel, in order to size its original meaning. They thought themselves authorized to do this work of textual harmonization because they considered themselves the Paraclete that Jesus had announced.¹²⁶

The followers of Montanus (end of the 2nd century) also believed in the coming of the Paraclete, inaugurated by the activity of Montanus himself, and it is a short step from Montanus to Tatian, whose *Diatessaron* was in vogue for the followers of Mani.¹²⁷

The Gospel's pericopes in the Qur'ān have their origin in the *Diatessaron* of the Syrian Tatian, the founder of the Encratite movement in the 2nd century.¹²⁸ Tatian was born in Assyria of pagan parents. He travelled widely, and in Rome became a student of Justin Martyr,

¹²⁵ Moshe Gil, "The creed of Abū 'Āmir", *Israel Oriental studies*, vol. 12, 1992, 41, referring to H. J. Polotsky, "Manichäismus", Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Suppl. VI, 269.

¹²⁶ Van Reeth, "Évangile", 174; cf. Robert Simon, "Mānī and Muḥammad", *Jerusalem studies in Arabic and Islam*, vol. 21, 1997, 134: "Both Manicheism and Islam assert the seriality of prophets"; Tor Andrae, *Les origines de l'islam et le christianisme*, French trans. by J. Roche, Paris, 1955, 209; Karl Ahrens, *Muhammed als Religionsstifter*, Leipzig, 1935, 130–2. Mani's prophetic understanding of himself as an equal partner of the Paraclete, as promised by Jesus, even perhaps as the Paraclete himself, was also eschatological. Islamic authors ascribed to Mani the claim that he was the Seal of the Prophets (Henri-Charles Puech, *Le Manichéisme: Son fondateur, sa doctrine*, Paris, 1949, 146, n. 248; Michel Tardieu, *Le Manichéisme*, Paris, 1981, 21; Julien Ries, "Les Kephalaia: La catéchèse de l'Église de Mani", in: Daniel De Smet, G. de Callataÿ & Jan M. F. Van Reeth (eds.), *Al-Kitāb: La sacralité du texte dans le monde de l'Islam*, Louvain, 2004, 143–8).

¹²⁷ W. Schepelern, *Der Montanismus und die phrygischen Kulte: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Tübingen, 1929, 28–30; Jan M. F. Van Reeth, "La zandaqa et le prophète de l'Islam", in: Christian Cannuyer & Jacques Grand'Henry (eds.), *Incroyance et dissidences religieuses dans les civilisations orientales*, Bruxelles, 2007, 73, 75, 79.

¹²⁸ Van Reeth, "Évangile", 162–6.

and a member of the Church. He later broke away from the Roman church and returned to Mesopotamia, where he exerted considerable influence around Syria and Antioch.¹²⁹ Van Reeth believes that Muḥammad probably belonged “to a sectarian community which was near to radical monophycism and to manicheism, and which was waiting for the Parousia in an imminent future”.¹³⁰

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was not to enter into the details of the various influences which contributed to the constitution of the Qur’ān,¹³¹ especially the Meccan Qur’ān, nor to deal with the intertextuality,¹³² or with the “common traditions” in the Bible and the Qur’ān.¹³³ Our aim was to show that many passages of the Meccan self-referential Arabic lectionary (Qur’ān) contain allusions to its “prehistory”: its insistence on its Arabicity, on its explanatory character, its aspect as a book of pericopes (*Perikopenbuch*),¹³⁴ its liturgical character, which did not “descend from Heaven”, but testifies that Muḥammad and his community around him, who helped him (Waraq b. Nawfal and Khadija, Christian or Jewish-Christian slaves in Mecca, for instance) knew more about Jewish-Christianity, Manicheism, gnosticism, etc., than is often accepted. They appear partly as interpreters of collections of logia, oral traditions, possibly taken up from liturgical lectionaries, directly or indirectly, and explained in Arabic during “liturgical assemblies”.¹³⁵ As we have seen above, the lectionary principle was a common practice

¹²⁹ P. M. Head, “Tatian’s christology and its influence on the composition of the Diatessaron”, *Tyndale Bulletin*, vol. 43, 1992, 121–3.

¹³⁰ Van Reeth, “Scribes”, 73.

¹³¹ See the *status quaestionis* by Gilliot, “Rétrospectives, I, II”.

¹³² John C. Reeves (ed.), *Bible and Qur’ān: Essays in scriptural intertextuality*, Atlanta, 2003. See in this volume John C. Reeves, “Some explorations of the intertwining of Bible and Qur’ān”, 43–60.

¹³³ See the very useful book by Johann-Dietrich Thyen, *Bibel und Koran: Eine Synopse gemeinsamer Überlieferungen*, Cologne, 2005. See also Joachim Gnllka, *Bibel und Koran: Was sie verbindet, was sie trennt*, Freiburg, 2007; Karl-Wolfgang Tröger, *Bibel und Koran: Was sie verbindet und unterscheidet, mit einer Einführung in Mohammeds Wirken und in die Entstehung des Islam*, revised ed., Stuttgart, 2008.

¹³⁴ Neuwirth, “Rezitationstext”, 102/“Texte de récitation”, 227.

¹³⁵ Jan Van Reeth, “Les études actuelles sur le Coran dans une perspective chrétienne”, *Solidarité-Orient* (Bruxelles), vol. 253, 2010, 11 (“Le Coran: recueil liturgique d’une communauté chrétienne?”).

in the Syriac churches. It is likely that Muḥammad and his group were influenced by such a practice.

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